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34. ANGOLA-CHINA: A DELEGATION FROM THE SOVIET-BACKED POPULAR MOVEMENT FOR THE LIBERATION OF ANGOLA, ONE OF THE THREE LIBERATION GROUPS THAT SHARE POWER IN ANGOLA'S TRANSITIONAL GOVERNMENT, IS

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CURRENTLY VISITING PEKING. THE DELEGATION IS LED BY LUCIO LARA, DEPUTY TO MPLA PRESIDENT AGOSTINHO NETO. LARA PROBABLY WILL ATTEMPT TO CONVINCE THE CHINESE TO REDUCE OR CEASE THEIR SUPPORT TO THE NATIONAL FRONT FOR THE LIBERATION OF ANGOLA, THE POPULAR MOVEMENT'S MAJOR RIVAL, AND PERHAPS WILL EVEN SEEK TO OBTAIN SOME CHINESE AID FOR NETO'S ORGANIZATION.4

PEKING HAS PROVIDED THE FRONT WITH MODEST AMOUNTS OF ARMS AND AMMUNITION AND HAS ASSIGNED ABOUT 100 MILITARY ADVISERS TO THE FRONT'S TRAINING CAMPS IN THE REPUBLIC OF ZAIRE. PEKING'S DECISION TO RECEIVE REPRESENTATIVES OF THE POPULAR MOVEMENT, MAY BE IN PART RECOGNITION OF THAT GROUP'S GROWING POLITICAL STRENGTH IN RECENT MONTHS.

THE INVITATION TO THE POPULAR MOVEMENT ALSO APPEARS TO BE PART OF A LARGER EFFORT BY THE CHINESE TO ESTABLISH A DEGREE OF INFLUENCE IN ALL THREE ANGOLAN NATIONALIST GROUPS. ABOUT A MONTH AGO, A DELEGATION REPRESENTING THE NATIONAL UNION FOR THE TOTAL INDEPENDENCE OF ANGOLA, THE SMALLEST OF THE THREE NATIONALIST ORGANIZATIONS, VISITED CHINA AND WAS PROMISED A SMALL AMOUNT OF

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MILITARY AID. PEKING HAS PROVIDED MODEST FUNDS TO THIS ORGANIZATION FOR AT LEAST THE PAST YEAR. THE CHINESE PROBABLY WILL CONTINUE TO CHANNEL THE BULK OF THEIR MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO THE NATIONAL FRONT.4

CHINA'S MOVE TO BROADEN ITS INFLUENCE AMONG THE RIVAL ANGOLAN GROUPS MAY STEM FROM CONCERN ABOUT A POSSIBLE RIFT BETWEEN ZAIRIAN PRESIDENT MOBUTU AND THE NATIONAL FRONT OVER THE FUTURE OF OIL-RICH CABINDA. WHILE ALL THE ANGOLANS ASSERT THAT THE EXCLAVE IS PART OF THEIR COUNTRY, MOBUTU HAS YET TO RECOGNIZE THIS CLAIM. PEKING MAY FEAR THE DISPUTE MAY EVENTUALLY CAUSE MOBUTU TO WITHDRAW HIS SUPPORT FROM THE NATIONAL FRONT, A DEVELOPMENT THAT WOULD WEAKEN THE FRONT IN ITS STRUGGLE WITH THE POPULAR MOVEMENT AND THE NATIONAL UNION. IN ANY EVENT, CONTACT WITH THE POPULAR MOVEMENT AND NATIONAL UNION AT THIS POINT CAN ONLY HELP ENSURE THAT PEKING WILL BE WELL-POSITIONED WHEN ANGOLA GAINS ITS INDEPENDENCE IN NOVEMBER--EVEN IF THIS MEANS IRRITATING MOBUTU BY DEALING WITH THE POPULAR MOVEMENT. MOBUTU HAS LONG BEEN AT ODDS WITH THE POPULAR MOVEMENT.4

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IN COMING MONTHS, THE CHINESE WILL SEEK TO KEEP THEIR RELATIONS WITH MOBUTU AND THE ANGOLANS ON A GENERALLY EVEN KEEL. THIS MEANS SCRUPULOUSLY AVOIDING ENTANGLEMENT IN THE CABINDA DISPUTE. LATE LAST YEAR WHEN MOBUTU VISITED PEKING, HE ATTEMPTED TO INVOLVE THE CHINESE BY REQUESTING MILITARY INSTRUCTORS FOR CABINDANS LIVING IN ZAIRE. PEKING NOT ONLY TURNED DOWN THE REQUEST, BUT REFUSED TO SEND GUERRILLA WARFARE INSTRUCTORS FOR ZAIRE'S REGULAR FORCES FOR FEAR THAT MOBUTU INTENDED TO PUT CABINDANS THROUGH THE COURSE. THE CHINESE, HOWEVER, GAVE MOBUTU A SUBSTANTIAL QUANTITY OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT, INCLUDING TANKS.4

AT THE SAME TIME, CHINA WILL PROBABLY WANT TO KEEP ITS PROFILE WITH THE ANGOLAN NATIONALIST GROUPS RELATIVELY LOW. ROBERTO, FOR HIS PART, PROBABLY DOES NOT WANT TO BECOME IDENTIFIED TOO CLOSELY WITH ANOTHER FOREIGN POWER; THE ZAIRIAN LABEL TAGGED ON HIM BY HIS OPPONENTS HAS BEEN A CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL LIABILITY. [REDACTED]

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